

Board of Directors Nominee Article

Date: April 24, 2025

Name: Nancy Downard

Nominee For: Vice-President, Region 5

Building a Stronger ONA Together: My Vision, Our Future

Dear Members,

At the heart of our professions is a commitment to care—not just for our patients, but for each other. As regulated health professionals, we know the power of advocacy. We fight for the health and dignity of our communities every day. It's time we channel that same passion inward—toward building a stronger Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA). I'm running in this election because I believe in the transformative power of solidarity, and I have a bold, clear vision for how we can elevate our union to meet the challenges of today—and those of tomorrow.

1. Putting Members First—Always

ONA is your union. It should feel like a lifeline, not a bureaucracy. Members can feel disconnected from decisions that directly affect their work, safety, and well-being. That isolating feeling needs to change.

My first priority is to build real-time, two-way communication channels between leadership and members. That means regular town halls, accessible reporting on union actions and finances, and regular outreach to ensure all voices—especially those in smaller locals or marginalized roles—are heard and respected. If elected, I will work to ensure that decision-making is where it belongs: on the frontline.

2. Fighting for Fair Wages and Safe Workplaces

Ontario's regulated health professionals are exhausted. We've carried the system on our backs through a pandemic, chronic understaffing, and dangerous policy decisions. While public praise has been abundant, real protections and compensation have been scarce.

I will fight with every tool we have to win meaningful wage increases and staffing ratios that prioritize patient safety and your well-being. We need to push for legally binding staffing standards, enforceable workplace safety protocols, and a compensation structure that reflects both the skill and sacrifice of our work.

Let me be clear: we will not settle for token wins. We will not accept contracts that leave us falling behind inflation or compromise our safety. We will fight like hell—and we will do it together.

3. Strengthening Our Bargaining Power

ONA's strength comes from its members. When we are united, informed, and mobilized, we are unstoppable.

We must continue to move beyond reactive negotiation in all sectors and continue to adopt proactive, member-driven bargaining models. That means preparing earlier, involving members in drafting demands, and organizing collectively long before contracts expire. It means investing in member education on labour rights and mobilization strategies to ensure every regulated health professional understands the power they hold—and how to use it.

When the time comes to bargain, we won't just be sitting at the table. We'll be surrounding it—with pickets, petitions, media pressure, and community allies. We'll raise the stakes, and we won't walk away until we win what we deserve.

4. A Union for All Regulated Health Professionals

ONA must be a safe, inclusive space for every nurse, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Registered Dietician and Speech Language Pathologist—regardless of race, gender identity, background, or where they practice. Equity and anti-oppression work cannot be an afterthought; it must be woven into every policy, every conversation, every decision.

If elected, I will commit to launching targeted campaigns to support and retain regulated health professionals from marginalized communities, and ensure union leadership reflects the diversity of our membership.

Our strength lies in our differences—let's finally act like it.

5. Reclaiming Public Healthcare

ONA's mission doesn't end at the door of our workplaces. The creeping privatization of Ontario's health care system is a direct threat to our jobs, our patients, and our public values. We must be loud, visible leaders in the fight to defend and rebuild universal public health care.

That means organizing politically—not just reacting to government policies but shaping them. I will push for stronger alliances with other unions, advocacy groups, and community organizations. Together, we can launch province-wide campaigns that expose the dangers of privatization and demand real reinvestment in public health care.

We are more than workers—we are voters, advocates, and agents of change. Let's start acting like it.

6. Leadership That Listens and Leads

My leadership style is rooted in collaboration, accountability, and courage. I believe in making bold moves—but only after truly hearing from the people they affect. I won't hide behind policy or procedure. I will answer your questions, return your calls, and stand beside you in action.

This isn't about ego. It's about service. I'm not running because I want a title—I'm running because I want a better union, and I know we can build it together.

Conclusion: The Time Is Now

This election is more than a leadership race. It's a chance to decide who we are—and who we want to be. We can choose to rise to meet this moment with energy, vision, and collective power.

Imagine an ONA where your voice is heard, your work is valued, and your future is protected. Imagine a union that fights with everything it has—not just in bargaining, but in every aspect of your professional life. That's the ONA I believe in. That's the ONA we deserve.

I'm asking for your vote—not just to lead, but to listen, to fight, and to build a union that reflects the brilliance, strength, and passion of its members.

Let's do this—together.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nancy" and last name "Howard" clearly distinguishable.

Signature of Nominee